

# Standing on the corner



A tour of the  
architecture  
of downtown  
Bloomington

By  
**Michael  
Freimann**

for the McLean County  
Historical Society





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of downtown Bloomington

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**McLEAN COUNTY**  
**MUSEUM OF HISTORY**

200 North Main Street • Bloomington, IL 61701 • Phone: 309-827-0428 • [www.McHistory.org](http://www.McHistory.org)



This book is dedicated to all of those who have helped me see my hometown in a brand new light. Remember to take a look around you, because you never know when things will change.

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BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

# FIRE ACRES OF ASHES

## The Heart of Bloomington's Business District Laid Waste by Fire.

### MILLIONS GONE UP.

#### Three Sides of the Public Square Swept by the Conflagration.

#### COURT HOUSE A RUIN.

#### Stately Edifice, Pride of the County now a Mere Shell.

#### Windsor Hotel and Five Blocks of Stores now only Embers.

Work of Five Total Hours.

#### THE PROGRESS OF THE FLAMES

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Inset photographs and layout by Michael Freimann



## Introduction

What remains of the architecture of historic Bloomington tells a story of growth appropriate for one of the fastest growing cities in the Midwest. In fact, those buildings that have faded into the past and fallen under the wrecking ball offer an equally relevant statement of that growth: To grow we often destroy.

Those that continue to stand are more than just old buildings — they are a link to the past. These buildings offer those who use them and those who view them a look at the Bloomington that was. They offer a common link to the generations that saw them rise and those who see them revitalized.

The buildings profiled in this book offer a cross section of the architecture that was practiced in Bloomington during most of its first 100 years. Many of these structures have varied histories, while others have served basically the same purpose — under a string of different owners — since the day they were built. The structures, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, range from the 1840s to the 1940s and evoke the dominant styles of those times. In some cases, buildings changed appearance to keep up with the times.

What ties them all together is the fact that they exist not in pictures or memory but in brick, steel and stone — oversized artifacts standing on the corner in silence. Together they serve as a quiet reminder of Bloomington's storied history and make a statement about the diversity of the human experience.

Bloomington architect George Miller, who is responsible for the design of a number of the buildings on the following pages, said of his multi-hued constructions during the rebuilding following the fire of June 1900:

“A man likes to have his place of business so that it can be distinguished in other ways from the exterior than by his name on the door. A variety of styles would give a pleasing appearance to the city which would be lost if uniformity was carried to any extent.”

—M. Freimann, 1999





The courthouse, completed in 1903, is shown in this 1904 photograph.

## Old McLean County Courthouse

200 N. Main Street

After a fire on June 19, 1900 destroyed the courthouse that was built in 1868, the county quickly moved to build its successor, an American Renaissance style building that was dedicated Sept. 23, 1903. Architects William Reeves and John M. Baillie proposed a classical design for the courthouse, characterized by the hierarchical order of elements and almost perfect symmetry. The dome is reminiscent of the buildings of the Italian Renaissance, from which many of the elements are taken.



The courthouse was the center of political life for many people in Bloomington in the 20th century, including native son Adlai Stevenson II, who gave a speech there during his successful run

for Illinois governor in 1948.

The courthouse, which cost \$461,640 when it was built, had a brush with near destruction in 1965 when the county decided it was no longer large enough. It was leased to the McLean County Historical Society in 1988 and now serves as the McLean County Museum of History.





**The Illinois House**, seen in this 1904 photograph when it was still called the Illinois Hotel, was built on the site of the Windsor Hotel which was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1900. In fact, the Illinois appears to have been built on the same Joliet stone foundation that supported the Windsor.

## Illinois House

201-207 W. Jefferson Street

**W**hen it was nearing completion in 1902, The Illinois was only one of three names considered by manager Frank Ewing for this luxury hotel. The others which Ewing rejected were The Bloomington and The McLean.

This Neo-Classic style building was designed by Chicago architect R.T. Newberry working under the auspices of H.L. Burnham. Notable features of the design are the Federal style window headers and vitrified brick.

A sixth floor was added to the original five-story structure in 1925. The addition, which included the copper French Mansard roof it now sports, was designed by Bloomington archi-



tect Arthur L. Pillsbury.

Upon completion of the addition, the hotel had 180 rooms and was considered one of the finest in Illinois. Among the many services offered in the hotel were a

full-service restaurant, a barbershop, a tailor shop, a pharmacy and a millinery. Among the famous guests during the hotel's heyday was President Theodore Roosevelt.

The hotel was sold to developer Delmar Rowe in 1961 and was reopened as the Illinois House, featuring four meeting rooms and a grand ballroom.

In 1987, the top three floors were made into a dormitory for Japanese employees of Diamond-Star Motors.



**The Ensenberger building,** seen the week of its opening in this 1926 photograph, still maintains much of its original beauty, most notably the ornate terra-cotta medallions on its east facade. The gothic spires seen in the picture, however, were removed in 1941 in an attempt to make the building look more modern.



Photo courtesy of The Pantagraph

## Ensenberger's 212 N. Center Street

**B**right terra-cotta medallions on the east facade of the building make Ensenberger's a jewel on the courthouse square. The English Gothic style building was designed by Bloomington architect Arthur L. Pillsbury. Pillsbury, however, did not live to see the building open in May 1926. He died in an automobile accident in October 1925.

The building was ornate inside and out, with gothic spires originally decorating the top of the building and the medallions, designed by Phillip Hooton, providing a burst of color.



Built for a cost of about \$250,000, the building included a six-room, fully furnished Spanish-style bungalow on the seventh floor with white stucco walls and arched doors and windows. An estimated 40,000 visitors toured the building in the week following its grand opening, some from as far away as

California and New York.

The business was started by Gustave A. Ensenberger in 1879, selling locally-produced, handmade furniture. It was operated by his descendants until it closed in 1995.





**The Benjamin & Schermerhorn** building, seen on the right in this 1917 photo, was constructed in 1857 as a dry goods store and later used to sell stationery by W.B. Read, whose business occupied the building at 210 Center St., from 1895 until 1951.

## Benjamin & Schermerhorn

210 N. Center Street

**T**his Italianate style building was designed by Bloomington architect Rudolph Richter and built by contractor S.G. Rounds in 1857 to serve as a dry goods store operated by Edward Benjamin and John Schermerhorn.

The three story building features a pressed brick facade and windows with arched tops.

Other notable tenants in the building's first years included The Pantagraph, which occupied the third floor until 1868. During these years, the newspaper was known as a radical "black republican" paper for its



views on slavery and its support of Abraham Lincoln.

Henry Capen & Sons, a loan broker and investment counselor, occupied a second floor office from 1886 to 1926. The longest tenant of the building, however, was W.B.

Read and Co., a stationery and book company that began on the first floor in 1895 and later occupied the whole building until proprietor William Read's death at age 89 in 1951.

The building was then occupied by Osco Drugs in 1952. The drugstore later expanded to occupy the Marblestone building in 1957.



**The Dewenter's building,** seen in this 1889 photograph, suffered through some structural difficulties in March 1979, when the back wall collapsed from weakening mortar between the bricks.



## **Dewenter's**

118 W. Washington Street

**T**his Greek Revival style building was one of three built by Dr. Eli Crothers in 1856. The other two are still standing: the Crothers and Chew Building, 111-113 N. Center, and the Italianate style Dr. Crothers building to the east at 116 W. Washington.

In their early years, the three buildings, including the centerpiece Dewenter's building, served as offices for a number of prominent doctors and lawyers, including William Ward Orme and his partner, Leonard Swett, who pioneered the insanity defense in criminal cases.

Among early retail stores to occupy the site was Myer Heilbrun's



men's store.

The Dewenter's building is so called because it housed the Dewenter & Co. men's clothing store for more than 100 years.

The store, first incorporated by Herman Dewenter and William Kreitzer in 1847, moved to this location in 1870 and remained there until its close in 1988. The store remained in the Dewenter family until 1946 and continued to operate under that name for 40 years.

The building was restored by Russell Francois in the late 1990s for use as architectural offices. The third floor was converted into a contemporary apartment and studio.



The Phoenix Block, seen at the center of this 1912 postcard advertising Williams Photography, was originally seven nearly-identical Greek Revival style buildings, but only two of them remain.

## Phoenix Block

106-108 W. Washington Street

Dubbed the “Phoenix Block” by *The Daily Pantagraph* because of how quickly they rose from the ashes after the fire of 1856, these two Greek Revival style buildings were originally part of a larger block of seven designed by an unknown architect. The other five buildings were razed during the construction of the Livingston & Sons Department Store to the west.



These buildings originally served as offices for lawyers who tried cases at the original small brick courthouse on the square and included the offices of Kersey Fell, an insurance agent. It was in Kersey Fell’s second-floor office that town developer Jesse Fell

first suggested to Abraham Lincoln that he should run for president.

Also at this meeting, Fell prodded Lincoln to write an autobiography which was used to introduce Lincoln to

a national audience.

In 1857, the third floor housed the Illinois Natural History Museum, one of the first museums in Illinois.

The buildings’ storefronts have served many merchants over the years, but during the 20th Century they housed a number of jewelry stores, including Homuth Jewelry from 1905 to 1922 and Sorg’s Jewelers from 1946 to 1988. Five other jewelry stores have also called this block home.





**The Livingston Building,** seen in this 1904 photograph, was constructed after the Great Fire of 1900 as a more modern update, even though the original store had survived the fire.

## Livingston Building

102 W. Washington Street

**A** downtown landmark since its construction in 1902, the Livingston Building was designed in the Chicago Tall Building style by Bloomington architect George Miller.



Built for a cost of \$36,000 shortly after the 1900 fire, the building was owned by Ike Livingston and the first floor originally housed Ike Livingston & Sons Apparel.

Ike Livingston immigrated to Bloomington from Daubringen, Germany, where he was a grain and cattle merchant, in 1882.

The second floor of the building housed a children's apparel shop and the Bloomington Elks Club was located

ed on the sixth floor from 1905 to 1915.

The building was also known for its roof garden in the early 1900s, with many Bloomington residents enjoying dancing and music under the stars.

Sigmund Livingston, a relative of the building's owner, founded the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, an organization to fight anti-semitism, while maintaining an office there.

Walgreen Drug Store and numerous legal and insurance concerns took up residence from about 1927 until 1969, when the drugstore moved to a new location at Eastland Mall.





**The McLean County Bank** building, seen in this circa 1885 photograph, was constructed in 1854 by Gen. Asahel Gridley, a prominent figure in Bloomington who founded the bank. The Third National Bank, shown here, occupied the building between 1887 to around 1909.

## McLean County Bank

102 N. Main Street

**T**his Italianate-style building was built in 1854 by Gen. Asahel Gridley to serve as the headquarters for his McLean County Bank. The design is based on nationally published styles of the time.

Gridley was recognized as one of Bloomington's first citizens, arriving in 1831. He was responsible for bringing the Illinois Central railroad to town and also was a prominent businessman, lawyer and politician.

He was an associate of town developers Jesse Fell and James Allin and was also known as a friend of Abraham Lincoln. Gridley also



had a part in founding the first newspaper in McLean County.

The building itself served as a bank for many years, starting as the McLean County Bank and later becoming the Third National Bank in 1887, Illinois

Savings and Trust in 1911, Bloomington Savings and Loan in 1926 and Lincoln Savings & Loan from 1936 to 1973. The top floor of the building served as the Masonic Hall from 1854 to c. 1867.

The building was restored to its original appearance in 1994 by Doug and Maggie Williams after plans to destroy it were rejected in 1989.



**The Rounds Block**, seen at right in this circa 1870 photograph, was a center of commerce and Bloomington social life from its inception in 1856-57. Parts of the building have been restored in recent years by Fred Wollrab.

## Rounds Block

105-111 W. Front Street

**B**ricklayer S.G. Rounds was the builder of this group of Italianate style buildings designed by Prussian-born architect



Rudolph Richter, who worked for Rounds and also designed the Benjamin & Schermerhorn building at 210 N. Center. The buildings in this block share a common wall and make up the oldest known commercial block in Illinois designed by a professional architect.

The block was home to numerous businesses since its construction, but for many of those years it served as a social center for the city, as home to numerous restaurants, taverns and entertainment concerns.

The building at 105 W. Front has been home to a restaurant for more than 100 years, at least 70 of those under the name Federal Cafe. The

Federal Cafe was only one of a row of restaurants that lined the two blocks of Front Street on either side of Main during the 1940s and 1950s and included Welch's Chop House in the Rounds Block and Murphy's Buffet and the Grand Cafe across the street.

The block has also housed at least one tavern for the last 100 years and was home to a billiard parlor for about 80 years, beginning in the late 1800s. It was also rumored to be the site of one of the longest-running regular poker games in Bloomington.





**The Miller-Davis** buildings were constructed in 1843 for James Miller and David Davis to serve as law offices. This photo taken around 1915 shows the bottom floor as a drug store, the first floor's original use.

## Miller-Davis Buildings

101, 103 N. Main & 104 E. Front Streets

**J**ames Miller and David Davis were the owners of what is now the oldest surviving building in downtown Bloomington.

The main building, designed in the vernacular Georgian style, was the second brick building in Bloomington. It was constructed by James Miller's son, William, and James Goodheart.

The first floor of the Main Street building served as a drug store, while the second was a law office that served the likes of Abraham Lincoln, Jesse Fell, Asahel Gridley, Leonard Swett and James M. Scott.

Lincoln went on to become the 16th president of the United States, while Davis became a U.S. Supreme Court Justice and Scott an Illinois Supreme Court Justice. Gridley and Jesse Fell were influential in the development of



Bloomington-Normal and Miller, the building's owner, served as state treasurer from 1856-1860.

The building at 104 E. Front was built by Davis to serve as his office and he worked there until 1848 when he became a circuit judge. The original building was torn down in 1895 and a two-story building was erected to replace it.

The buildings underwent dramatic changes over the years, and an aluminum facade was placed over the original brick in the 1960s. The aluminum siding remained in place until 1979 when the building was given to the McLean County Historical Society by Herb and Hannah Livingston. Restoration was completed in 1981. The building at 104 E. Front is a reconstruction of the original.



**Central Station,** seen in this circa 1903 photograph, was built with room for 11 horses, which were used until 1907 when the department got motorized fire trucks. The second floor featured a hay loft.



## Central Fire Station

220-228 E. Front Street

**C**entral Fire Station was built in direct response to the Great Fire of 1900, which destroyed more than \$2 million worth of property in the downtown area, including 45 buildings, during the seven-hour blaze.

The *Pantagraph* that morning wrote the following:

“Scourged with scorpion tongues of flame, the city of Bloomington lies prostrate in ashes today. Her heart is eaten out with the canker of destruction and for a moment — only for a moment — she is fallen dumb and motionless under the awful pall of chastisement.”

Shortly after the fire, rebuilding began in earnest and the city formed a



commission which declared the fire department outdated and came up with the idea of building a central station and three outlying stations.

The station, built in a North European Renaissance style, was designed by George Miller and completed in the fall of 1902 for a cost of around \$30,000. The original belltower was 90 feet high and was later removed.

The station was Bloomington's No. 1 station until 1973, when the new headquarters on Lee Street was opened and it closed for good in May 1975, when the Empire Street station was opened. It was purchased that year by Arden Nowers and Daniel Doyle, who converted it into a restaurant.

**Higgins, Jung & Kleinau building,** seen in this 1889 photograph, has a marble front designed by Hamer Higgins, who worked with architect George Miller to showcase his talents in the making of the building. Miller worked with his client to personalize the store.



## Higgins, Jung & Kleinau

227-231 E. Front Street

**T**he marble front of this Victorian Romanesque style building designed by George Miller shows off the handiwork of its original tenant, the H.J. Higgins Marbleworks.

Built in 1886 by Civil War veteran Hamer J. Higgins to serve as the home of his monument company, the building was also a repository of local history for much of its existence.

The business, which produced grave markers until its close in 1956, kept records of all of the headstones it produced and those records were often used by local people to trace their family trees.

Higgins, an Ohio native who



fought for the Union army in the battles of Shiloh and Chickamauga, moved to Bloomington in 1868 and founded the company in 1876. The firm was incorporated as Higgins, Jung & Kleinau Monument

Co. following Higgins' death in 1902 and the company was operated by descendants of C.A. Kleinau and J.P. Jung until 1956.

The monument company also erected the tall Soldiers Memorial that stands at the entrance to Miller Park.

Nybaake Vacuum was another notable tenant from 1960 to 1992. The building was then restored by Mike Temple and includes apartments on the second floor.



# State Farm Insurance

115 E.  
Washington &  
112 E. Jefferson  
streets

**The State Farm Insurance building,** seen in this 1931 photograph, was built in sections from 1929 to 1945, with the south part started in 1929 and the final four floors added in 1934. The building was a far cry from the company's first offices, which were housed in the Market House building then owned by the McLean County Farm Bureau, from 1923 to 1925.



When George J. Mecherle started his automobile insurance company in 1922 from a desk in the Durley building, he could hardly have envisioned the growth that would lead to the construction of this Art Deco-style building designed by Bloomington architects Archie Schaeffer and Phillip Hooton.

Built in sections over the span of about 16 years, the south part of the company's home office was the first to go up with eight floors built in 1929. An additional four floors and a penthouse were added to the building in 1934.

When an increase in policy-holders and employees necessitated further

expansion, the company acquired the old Odd Fellows Hall on the corner of East and Jefferson streets and razed it to build the first eight floors of the north part, with construction beginning in 1939 and ending in 1940. The final five stories of the north section were added in 1945.



At the time of the north section's completion in 1945, the company had more than 1.1 million policies in effect and more than \$43.5 million in assets. The home office employed about 1,300 people.

The building still houses offices for State Farm, although the company's headquarters moved to its building on Veterans Parkway in 1974.



# Corn Belt Bank

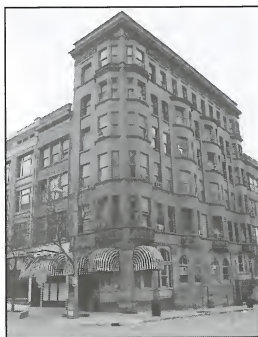
101 W.  
Jefferson Street

**The Corn Belt Bank,** seen in this 1917 photograph, was built in 1901 after the Great Fire of 1900. The ornate building with its red brick facade was designed by George Miller. The bank had a successful run in the building from its opening until 1961, when the bank moved to its new offices. Corn Belt Bank offered drive-up service at this building in 1952, installing a sidewalk teller window on the Main Street side which allowed customers to park and walk up.



**C**orn was a dominant motif for this building, from the name of the bank it housed to the ear of corn capitals that topped the raindrop sandstone columns on the first floor. Designed by George Miller and completed in 1901, this Neo-Classical style building with Richardsonian Romanesque elements is one of the most ornate in the downtown area.

Built for a cost of about \$70,000 by the Hayes family shortly after the fire of 1900, the building stands on the site formerly occupied by Adam's Ark, a local cigar store and hangout.



In addition to the corn capitals, the building also features a terra-cotta griffin and shield motif on the second-floor oriels and originally displayed the name Corn Belt Bank in raised letters. The name was later chiseled off, but the outline remains on the Main Street side.

The bank occupied the building from its construction until 1961, when it moved to offices on the corner of Jefferson and East streets. The upper floors' originally housed offices.

The building was home to several clothing concerns from 1961 to 1975, when First Midstate Inc. moved in.

# McGregor Building

311 N. Main Street

Arthur L. Pillsbury designed this Neo-Classic building after the original structure was destroyed in the fire of 1900. The three-story structure features a second floor with a central oriel and bowed window flanked on either side by transomed windows. The third floor features round-arched windows with terra cotta medallions above and fine decorative brickwork.



The building originally cost \$15,000 and was completed in 1901, when the R. C. Rogers Wallpaper Company moved in as the first tenant along with the Bloomington Art Society on the third floor.

The wallpaper concern was owned by Reginald Rogers, who came to Bloomington in 1854 when he was 4 years old. Rogers told his life story in *The Daily Pantagraph* on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of his arrival in Bloomington and wove a tale of success in the city.

The Rogers firm occupied the building until 1936, when the National Tea Company moved in. In 1939, Kinney Shoes began an 18-year run in the building. Other notable tenants included the The



**The McGregor building**, seen in an 1907 photograph when it was the R.C. Rogers Wallpaper Co., was owned by Mary McGregor, the widow of Bloomington business man James McGregor. The building was erected shortly after the fire for use by the wallpaper concern, but the storefront was redesigned in 1905.

Brack Shop from 1960 to 1974 and Soo Kim's Martial Arts from 1986 to 1993.

The building has returned to one of its original uses as artists Harold Gregor and Ken Holder maintain studios on the building's upper floors.



# Geo. Brand

319 N.  
Main Street

**The Geo. Brand Building**, seen in this 1903 photograph, was built as a replacement for a building that was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1900. This building and its predecessor, which was built in 1885, were both the design of Bloomington architect George Miller. This building was only one of three owned by the Brands, who also had two warehouses located down Monroe Street to the east behind Second Presbyterian Church.



One of the first buildings to be rebuilt after the fire of 1900, this Victorian Romanesque style building, like its predecessor, was designed by George Miller. Built for a cost of \$20,000 and featuring fine terra cotta work with a leaf motif, it took 130 days to build and was up less than four months after the fire was extinguished.

The building was originally owned by furniture maker George Brand, a German immigrant who came to Bloomington in 1853 and learned his trade in the Chicago and Alton railroad coach shop on the city's west side.

Brand started his own business in the 1870s and built his first building on the corner of Monroe and Main in 1885.

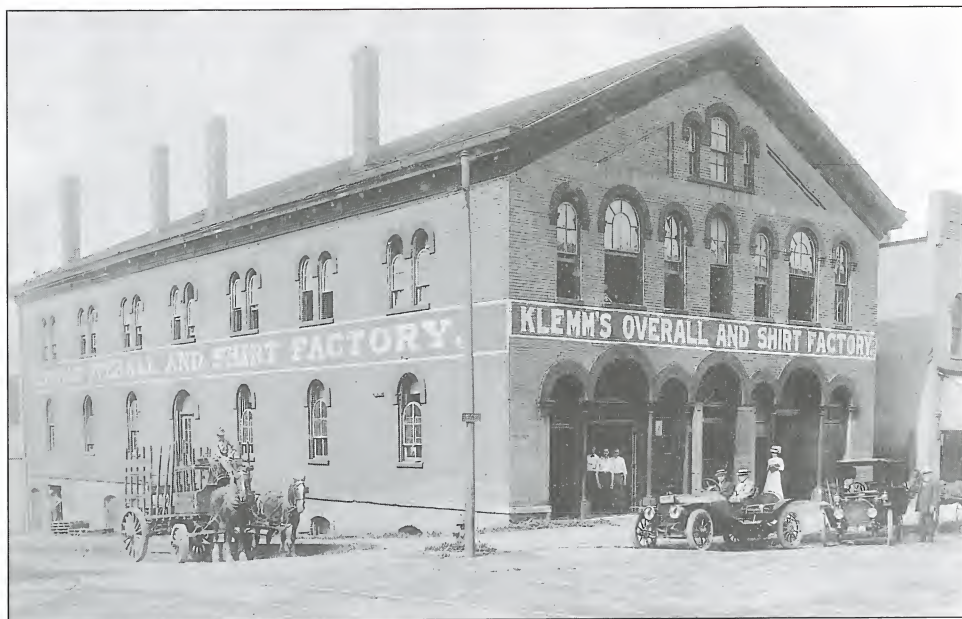
Brand died in 1919 at the age of 89 and his son, George Jr., ran the business until its close in May 1926.



Following the close of the furniture business, the building was occupied by Illinois Power for many years, serving as the utility company's office from 1926 until 1983.

The building then returned to its roots as a furniture store, serving first as the home of Woodie Alan's Unfinished Furniture in 1983 and the Color Wheel, an interior design firm, from 1987 to 1995.





**The Market House**, seen in this photo as C.W. Klemm's Overall Factory, which the building housed from 1909 to 1913, has a storied history, including being at the center of an anti-trust case argued before the Illinois Supreme Court.

## Market House

109-111 W. Monroe Street

**B**uilt in 1866 by George W. Parke, this Italianate style building owned by B.F. Hoopes was the center of a legal controversy that made it all the way to the Illinois State Supreme Court.



The building was constructed to serve as a market house that would bring together all of the meat and produce sellers under one roof, but it proved unsuccessful until Bloomington passed a law in 1868 requiring all butchers to sell their meat there.

When one butcher, Jacob Wahl, was fined for not selling at the market house, he appealed the fine to the circuit court, where it was overturned by

Judge John M. Scott. The city's ordinance was eventually found in violation of anti-trust laws.

The building later served as home to the Pantagraph from 1868 to 1875 and among other things, housed the Bloomington Armory and a roller rink.

From 1923 to 1925, the building was the home office for State Farm Insurance. The McLean County Farm and Home Bureaus, ironically, used the building and the street corner to operate a farmer's market from 1924 to 1944.

Another longtime tenant was the Koldaire Equipment Co. from 1946 to 1993.

# Schroeder Building

316 N. Main Street

**B**uilt as a replacement for the Minerva Block, owned by German immigrant Dr. Herman Schroeder, after the 1900 fire, this Romanesque Revival style building designed by Arthur Pillsbury is more notable for the stories surrounding its owners than for its construction.

Schroeder was not always well-liked by his community, but was highly successful, establishing first a medical practice in

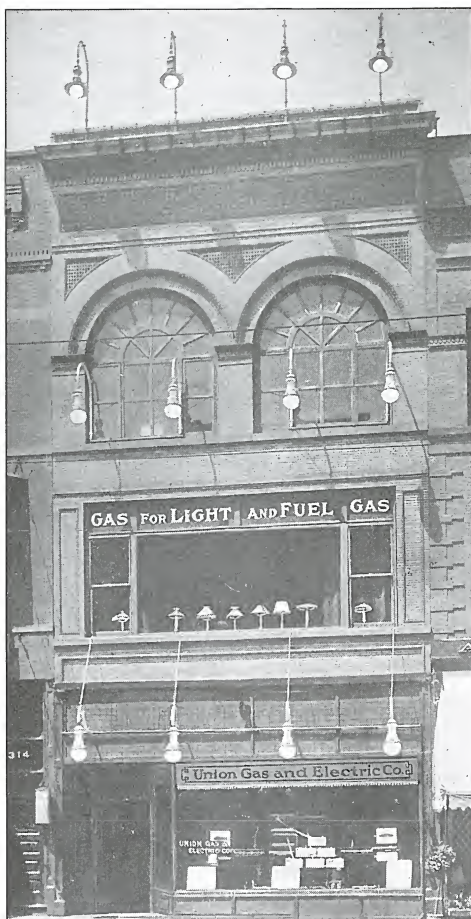


and then building a fortune through land speculation, an interest in the coal industry, and a thriving nursery where he cultivated vines for wine grapes.

Married to a Prussian baroness, Schroeder lost assorted treasures in the fire, including rare Roman coins, Renaissance artwork and historical papers written by some of the biggest political names in Europe and Illinois.

A self-proclaimed "free-thinker," Schroeder was denounced by fellow Germans in Bloomington for his political views.

Following Schroeder's death, the building was occupied for 62 years, from 1904 to 1966, by the Union Gas



**The Schroeder building**, seen in this 1917 photograph, was built in 1903 and housed the Union Gas and Electric Company offices for the first half of the 20th Century. The picture shows not only the signs declaring the building as the gas and electric company, but also a multitude of lamps hanging from each floor to serve as a reminder of the product.

and Electric Company, which became a division of Northern Illinois Gas in 1957. The storefront was originally used as a retail outlet for gas lamp fixtures.

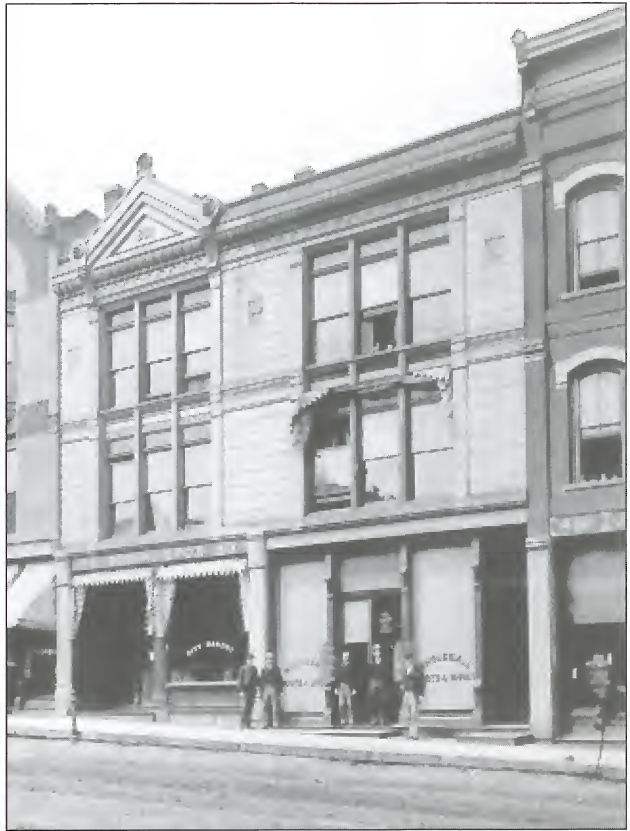
Union Gas was well known for an explosion at its gas plant on West Washington Street in January 1910 that killed three people.



# J.R. Mason Building

418-420 N. Main  
Street

**The J.R. Mason building,** seen in this 1889 photograph, was owned by Judson R. Mason, who served as the mayor of Bloomington from 1888 to 1889 and was also a member of the city council. Mason may have known the architect, George Miller, through Miller's involvement with city politics. Mason had the building built to house his insurance business



**T**his Renaissance Revival style building was designed by architect George Miller to serve as office space for the Insurance Exchange, owned by Bloomington resident Judson Rowell Mason.

Completed in 1883, the building was home to Mason & McFadden Insurance and Bloomington Mutual Life Benefit until 1890.

Mason served as a Bloomington alderman from 1885 to 1887 and was later elected mayor from 1888 to 1889. As mayor, he was credited by *The Daily Pantagraph* for helping to bring electric lighting to the city and he also owned part of a local electric



company. Mason made his fortune in the insurance business, however, despite losses he suffered from claims made after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Mason later moved to Chicago in the 1890s and died there in 1901.

The upper floors were designed as elegant "French Flats" with bronze hardware, marble fireplaces and grained woodwork to serve middle class people living downtown.

The building served a number of businesses in the years following his departure, most notably housing the American Express Co., later renamed Railway Express, from 1893 to 1952.





**The Chatterton Opera House,** seen in this 1917 photograph, opened April 7, 1910, with a VIP performance of the traveling musical "Madame Sherry," a retelling of the Merry Widow story.

## Chatterton Opera House

106-114 E. Market Street

**G**eorge Miller was the architect of this Neo-Classic style theater, built in 1910 to replace the Grand Opera House, which had burned the year before.



The Chatterton originally had an Ionic pilastered portico and a cornice featuring stone lions gripping chains in their mouths to support the awning.

The opera house was owned by George W. Chatterton, a Central Illinois theater developer who owned several others in the area, including ones in Springfield and Danville.

During its heyday, the Chatterton and its predecessor saw such stars as Ed Wynn, Ethel Barrymore, Mae

West and Lillian Russell walk its stage.

Its name was changed to the Illini Theatre in 1924 and it closed in 1933 — made a relic of the past by the emerging popularity of talking movies which replaced the vaudeville show as America's favorite form of entertainment.

The theater was briefly opened once more in October 1946, when the Community Players used it for rehearsal space. It also served as the office for State Farm Fire and Casualty from 1953 to 1958. It was Biddle Advertising from 1959 to 1974 and has been the home of the MARC Center since 1982.

**The Scottish Rite Temple, or Consistory, seen in this circa 1922 photograph, cost nearly \$600,000 fully furnished by the time it was completed in 1922.**



## Bloomington Consistory

110 E. Mulberry Street

A huge celebration marked the laying of the cornerstone for this Neo-Classical building in July 1921, but that ceremony was delayed nearly two weeks when the cornerstone was lost in transit. The ceremony came off eventually, however, and it was a grand affair that featured a parade and a speech by then-Illinois Attorney General Edward J. Brundage.

Designed by Chicago architect Harris W. Huehl and completed by his partner, R.G. Schmid, after Huehl's death, the Consistory was built to serve as the temple for the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in the Valley of Bloomington.

The building was envisioned as the grand home for the American



Passion Play written by member Delmar Duane Darrah, and performed there continuously since 1923 — the longest running play of its kind depicting the life and crucifixion of Christ.

A grand home it was. At the time of its completion in 1922, the building boasted the largest stage west of New York, measuring 45 feet deep by 85 feet wide. The building, which had seating for 2,000, also featured a dining room to seat that many and a huge lobby with two grand staircases.

The Bloomington landmark is visited by thousands each year who come to see the Passion Play, which Darrah wrote to exemplify some of the ideals of Freemasonry through the sacred stories of the New Testament.



# Architectural Style Guide

The architectural styles displayed in the buildings of downtown Bloomington are often a mixture of many styles of the time and in some case there are only certain elements which suggest a certain style. Most American work of the 19th and early 20th centuries is derived from historic European styles. The following are descriptions of the styles:

## **Georgian (1700-1830)**

The Georgian style reflects Renaissance ideals made popular in England by architect Sir Christopher Wren and was one of the most widely used styles in early American buildings during the Colonial period. The style is simple with a central pavilion with pediment and pilasters and narrow rectangular windows.

## **English Gothic (1800-1930)**

The Gothic style has a long history in the United States and was first imported from England for use in churches during the late 18th and early 19th Centuries during the Gothic Revival movement. The English Gothic style is distinguished by the pointed arch and highly-detailed polychromatic ornamentation. Gothic buildings often featured steep, pointed roofs which would not have been translated to commercial use.

## **Greek Revival (1820-1860)**

Hallmarks of the Greek Revival style as exhibited in Bloomington architecture include bold, simple molding on the exterior and interior, pedimented gables, heavy cornices with unadorned friezes and horizontal transoms above the entrances. The Greeks did not use arches as the Romans did, so Greek Revival buildings do not have the arched windows.

## **Italianate (1840-1880)**

The Italianate style commercial buildings featured low-pitched roofs, bracketed cornices, round and segmented arched windows with decorative headers, and recessed entrances. Sometime known as Tuscan, Lombard, Round or Bracketed, the versatility of this design made it almost a national style in the 1850s.

## **Neo-Classic (1900-1920)**

Neo-Classicism is based on the Greek and Roman architectural orders and is used to describe buildings which show classic elements in their design. The style may feature pedimented porticos and large windows with single sashes. Since Greek influence is often stronger in this style, the arch is often not used and the moldings are often kept simple.

## **Victorian Romanesque Richardsonian Romanesque (1870-1900)**

Romanesque styles borrowed from the early European Middle Ages (c. 900 to 1200) and are typified by the use of modest columns, Roman arches and massive masonry. Henry Hobson Richardson created a unique American style from these elements shortly after the Civil War, using large scale and heavily rusticated Romanesque forms.

# Architectural Style Guide

## American Renaissance North European Renaissance Renaissance Revival (1820-1900)

Renaissance styles developed during the European Renaissance (c. 1400-1600). These were based on revived appreciation of the Roman architecture. These ideas spread throughout Europe and versions of Renaissance styles developed in France, Spain, Northern Europe and the British Isles. American architects in the Victorian period based much of their work on these styles, sometimes faithfully copying the style and other times using them far more freely for the demands of American building needs.

### Chicago Tall Building (1880-1920)

The result of advances in construction technology which used steel frames to allow buildings to get taller, the Chicago Tall Building style is characterized by the projecting bays

or oriels that run the length of the building. The commercial style is often marked by a flat roof and a terminating cornice. The facade is organized in horizontal bands and sometimes borrows elements from the Richardsonian Romanesque style with rough stone and recessed openings and from Neo-Classic style using pilasters to create vertical emphasis in the composition.

## Art Deco (1925-1940)

Art Deco takes its name from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris in 1925. It is a style that was meant to appear modern and include artistic expression. The ornamentation consists of low-relief geometrical designs. Concrete, smooth-faced stone and metal are characteristic of exterior coverings, with terra cotta, glass or mirrored accents. Polychromatic elements are also a part of the design.

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### Useful terms

**ARCHITRAVE** The molding around a window or door.

**BELT COURSE** A narrow horizontal band projecting from the exterior walls of a building.

**CAPITAL** The top, decorated part of a column or pilaster.

**CLASSICAL** Pertaining to the art of Rome or Greece.

**CORNICE** In classical architecture, the upper, projecting ornamentation at

the top of a building.

**FACADE** Any side of a building given special architectural treatment

**FENESTRATION** The arrangement of windows in a wall.

**MANSARD ROOF** A roof that has two slopes on all four sides.

**MOLDING** The continuous decorative band that is either carved into or applied to a surface.

**PARAPET** The low, solid protective wall or railing along the edge of a roof or balcony.

**PEDIMENT** A triangular, crowning element used over doors and windows.

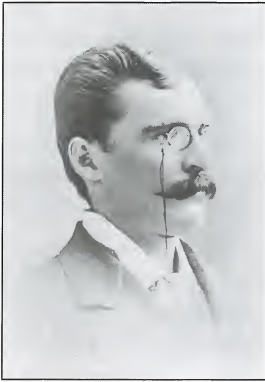
**PILASTER** A shallow pier attached to a wall resembling a classical column.

**TERRA COTTA** A fine-grain, brown-red, fired clay used for roof tiles and decorations.



## Prominent architects

George Miller and Arthur Pillsbury were the two most prominent and prolific architects during the time most of the subjects of this book were built. Each was responsible for more than 100 Central Illinois buildings. The following are brief profiles of each man:



**George Miller**  
circa 1885

### **George H. Miller**

1856-1927

The son of German immigrants, Miller began his career as an apprentice to Prussian-born Bloomington architect Rudolph Richter at age 15. After a brief stay with architect John Harris in 1874 in Columbus, Ohio and six months as a draftsman with the Chicago firm of Frederick and Edward Baumann, he returned to Bloomington in 1875 to embark on a long career. Among the first buildings he designed in Bloomington were the Pantagraph building and the Frank Oberkoetter store. In his career, Miller designed more than 120 buildings, including Cook Hall at Illinois State University.

Miller was also active in city politics, serving as city treasurer and later third ward alderman. He married Rose Stautz in 1887 and they had three children. Miller died March 6, 1927.



**Arthur Pillsbury**  
circa 1895

### **Arthur L. Pillsbury**

1869-1925

The son of Illinois State Normal University professor W.L. Pillsbury, Arthur Low Pillsbury was educated in Normal in his early years and later attended Harvard before graduating from the University of Illinois in 1895. Pillsbury played on the first U of I football team. His career as an architect in Bloomington got a major boost from the fire of 1900 and he later more than 100 structures. In addition to those listed in this book, Pillsbury was also responsible for Bloomington High School building on East Washington Street and the Miller Park Zoo building.

Pillsbury married Daisy Hill in 1899 and they had one daughter, Frances. Pillsbury died Oct. 26, 1925 in a car accident while returning from the Illinois-Michigan football game in Champaign.

## Select Bibliography

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### ROUNDS BLOCK

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### MARKET HOUSE

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### SCHROEDER BUILDING

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### BLOOMINGTON CONSISTORY

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## Notes

## Notes



## Notes

# McLean County Museum of History

The McLean County Museum of History, operated by the McLean County Historical Society, is where the history of generations comes alive. Your membership in the Society, a private non-profit organization, is vital for the continued development of educational programs, special and temporary exhibits, and research.

## Basic Membership Privileges

- ☆ Free admission to the Museum and Library.
- ☆ Free subscription to our newsletter.
- ☆ 10 percent discount in the museum gift shop.
- ☆ Invitations to exhibit previews, special programs, and annual dinner meeting.
- ☆ Reduced fees for programs and events.
- ☆ Pre-publication discounts for our books.

## Membership Levels

**Student or Fixed Income \$15** Basic benefits.

**Allin - Individual \$25** Basic benefits.

**Allin - Family \$40** Basic benefits plus membership card for each family member.

**Fifer \$50** Basic family benefits plus two guest passes.

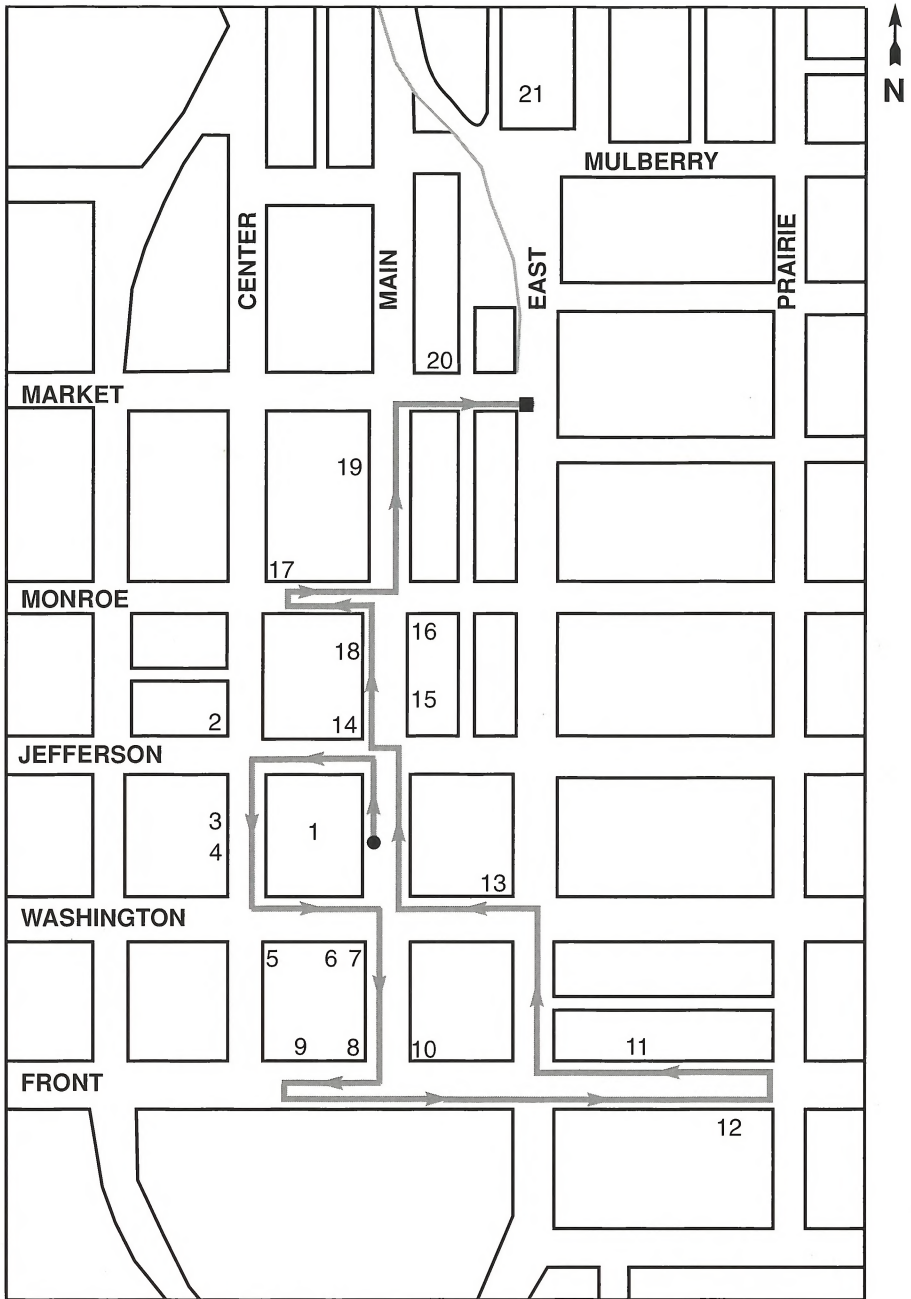
**Davis \$100** Basic family benefits; two guest passes; 1 free logo item (upon request).

**Fell \$250** Basic family benefits; Four guest passes; 2 free logo items and a museum publication (upon request).

**Stevenson \$500** Basic family benefits; six guest passes; 2 free logo items and a museum publication (upon request); invitation to a Stevenson House event.

**Lincoln \$1000** Basic family benefits plus 10 guest passes; 2 free logo items and a museum publication; invitations to special exhibit openings and programs for major donors; complimentary use of the museum for a private event; curatorial consultation for personal collections (upon request); special recognition in the museum newsletter and annual report.





## Downtown Building Locations

- Start

■ Finish

1. Courthouse
2. Illinois House
3. Ensenbergers
4. Benjamin & Schermerhorn
5. Dewenter's
6. Phoenix Block
7. Livingston Building

8. McLean County Bank
9. Rounds Block
10. Miller-Davis Building
11. Central Fire Station
12. Higgins, Jung & Kleinau
13. State Farm
14. Corn Belt Bank

15. McGregor Building
16. George Brand Building
17. Market House
18. Schroeder Building
19. J.R. Mason Building
20. Chatterton Opera House
21. Bloomington Consistory